

Ecotourism Development as an Alternative Livelihood for Guassa Community, Ethiopia

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Abstract : The study aims at assessing the prospects and challenges of community-based ecotourism development in and around the Guassa Community Conservation Area (GCCA) for the establishment of alternative sources of livelihood for local people and the conservation of natural resources. The Guassa area and its surrounding area are endowed with natural, cultural, and religious tourism resources. The study is descriptive in its design and uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Interviews and questionnaires were used as an instrument for data gathering. The interview was undertaken with government officials, NGO officials, and experts, with three local community representatives. The three Kebeles of Guassa were chosen using purposive sampling because of the fact that they are immediate neighbors to GCCA, and hence, 150 questionnaires were administered proportionally to the household numbers in each kebeles. The perspectives of the MoCT, EWCA, and some Tour Operation agencies were uncovered through questionnaires; for each of them, five questionnaires were administered, and all the returns were used in the analysis. Frequency, percentage, average mean, One Way-ANOVA, and independent t-test are used to analyze quantitative data. The findings revealed that food insecurity is commonplace in the study area. The local people's reliance on the conservation area's resources has been increasing, and the area size is also dwindling from time to time. On the other hand, the local people's levels of awareness about Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) are low. In addition, the local capacity in relation to conservation and CBET development is also low, even though there is inadequate training offered by the government and NGOs. In general, tourism is not yet considered an alternative source of income and a means of conserving natural resources. In addition, the challenges for CBET development apart from low awareness level about CBET and low capacity, poor infrastructure, and poor tourism facilities were also identified as challenges in the study area.

Keywords : ecotourism, CBET, alternative livelihood, conservation

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